

## **LOCAL SESQUICENTENNIAL COMMITTEES**

The Commission will lead the linkage, coordination, unification, and support of existing museums and Civil War sites. The Commission will promote Civil War museums, sites and local committee actions through an interactive website, computer kiosks, maps and brochures at Welcome Centers and locations throughout the state, with the goal of making travel easy for visitors and citizens throughout the Commonwealth.

Each locality will be asked to form a local sesquicentennial committee to work with the state Commission and coordinate events within the community. The local committee will plan programs, events and activities that highlight specific local history, with the state Commission acting as the umbrella under which they all fall.

### **Comments, Thoughts and Questions of the Workgroup**

1. Establish firmly what it is that we are asking localities to do. Don't issue a blanket request for involvement - - be specific.
2. Don't raise expectations that can't be met down the line.
3. Being able to easily plan a trip to Virginia is VITAL.
4. Understand that the *opportunities* provided by the sesquicentennial also create an *obligation* to present the history that is uncomfortable and unpleasant as well as that which is exciting.
5. A fundamental goal of any program should be answering the question, "Why does the Civil War matter?"
6. A regional approach may be best for coordination (e.g., Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation; Journey through Hallowed Ground).
7. Consideration: How do we organize localities regionally?
8. Use the state park system. With established themes, it is possible to provide a Civil War education experience even in places without direct CW ties.
  - Is it possible to re-task the kiosks already in use in state parks?
  - Show Dr. Robertson's film in state parks?
9. Install Commission and CW Trails logos at every Welcome Center and rest area.
10. How will we decide what to include and what to exclude on a calendar of events?
11. How do we best utilize (and oversee) volunteers?

12. How do we establish, use and monitor Speaker's Bureau volunteers?

### **Suggested Activities and Involvement**

1. Inventory the Civil War-related sites in your locality and report that information to Commission staff for use in programming interactive website and computer kiosks at Welcome Centers. Includes: historic homes, museums, cemeteries, battlefields, special library collections, historical society research centers, etc. Provide updated website information and travel information.
2. Hold Public Forums and Roundtable discussions to get ideas, feedback, etc. from community. Use that feedback to help plan programs that appeal to citizens in your community.
3. Plan events and activities that showcase the locality's Civil War history, and that have importance and meaning to its citizens.
  - Amplify annual themes established by the Commission, when possible.
  - In addition to the military history, highlight the full story of the way the war impacted the locality (e.g., homefront support, impact on agriculture and natural resources, etc.)
  - Explore the personal stories of people in the locality during the Civil War. Tell their stories through the website (using diary entries, letters and photographs), so that people can then visit those areas. Tell the real stories of people and how the war affected them.
4. Focus on the document preservation program that will be the lasting legacy of the sesquicentennial: Encourage citizens to go through letters, diaries, journals, artifacts etc. for scanning and addition to the document preservation project being undertaken by the Library of Virginia.
5. Record unrecorded history. Transcribe the locality's 1860 Census - see Rockbridge County project, Bud Robertson's project - - list of militia units, list of troops from the locality. Involve students and volunteers in the process.
6. Invest in the HistoryMobile project by contributing something that will be displayed (e.g., essay contest winners). Collaborate with the Commission to bring the locality to your locality.
7. Work with state and national parks to record Podcast tours of area battlefields.
8. School Superintendent: Partner with the National Park System to select teachers for the Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program.

9. Encourage citizens to support activities through donation to the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Fund or through the purchase of Sesquicentennial special license plates.
10. Involve students in local history through essay contests, art contests and writing contests.
11. Tell your story - - whether through a published history of locality's Civil War involvement, brochures or a website that the Commission can link to.
12. Preservation: work with CVBT, SVBF, CWPT and other groups to preserve endangered battlefields for future generations.
13. Work with Civil War Trails program to open access to un-interpreted sites.

### **The State Commission's Role**

1. Provide technical assistance to local committees by aiding searches for grants, in-kind resources, grant-writing, etc. VAM can also assist with grant-writing workshops.
2. Serve as the umbrella under which all activities and events fall - - coordination, publicizing and making it easy for visitors to travel to the locality.
3. Market the statewide sesquicentennial program through the Virginia Tourism Corporation.
4. Work with the local committee to schedule a HistoryMobile tour.
5. The state Commission may offer matching grants to localities as seed money to establish programs that meet certain criteria and support the Commission's goals.